

Whereas, “[f]rom its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution”, as noted in section 2(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401(a));

Whereas Thomas Jefferson wrote—

(1) in 1798 that each right encompassed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is dependent on the other rights described in that Amendment, “thereby guarding in the same sentence, and under the same words, the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press: inasmuch, that whatever violated either, throws down the sanctuary which covers the others”; and

(2) in 1822 that the constitutional freedom of religion is “the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights”;

Whereas religious freedom “has been integral to the preservation and development of the United States”, and “the free exercise of religion goes hand in hand with the preservation of our other rights”, as expressed by the 41st President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1993; and

Whereas we “continue to proclaim the fundamental right of all peoples to believe and worship according to their own conscience, to affirm their beliefs openly and freely, and to practice their faith without fear or intimidation”, as expressed by the 42nd President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1998: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) on Religious Freedom Day on January 16, 2020, honors the 234th anniversary of the enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; and

(2) affirms that—

(A) for individuals of any faith and individuals of no faith, religious freedom includes the right of an individual to live, work, associate, and worship in accordance with the beliefs of the individual;

(B) all people of the United States can be unified in supporting religious freedom, regardless of differing individual beliefs, because religious freedom is a fundamental human right; and

(C) “the American people will remain forever unshackled in matters of faith”, as expressed by the 44th President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 2012.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have 5 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing in executive session.

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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my fellow Nitza Sola-Rotger have privileges of the floor for the balance of the day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOTICE: REGISTRATION OF MASS MAILINGS

The filing date for the 2019 fourth quarter Mass Mailing report is Monday, January 27, 2020. An electronic option is available on Webster that will allow forms to be submitted via a fillable PDF document. If your office did no mass mailings during this period, please submit a form that states “none.”

Mass mailing registrations or negative reports can be submitted electronically at http://webster.senate.gov/secretary/mass_mailing_form.htm or delivered to the Senate Office of Public Records, 232 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-7116.

The Senate Office of Public Records is open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. when the Senate is not in session). For further information, please contact the Senate Office of Public Records at (202) 224-0322.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 336, H.R. 133.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 133) to promote economic partnership and cooperation between the United States and Mexico.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee

on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “United States-Mexico Economic Partnership Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The United States and Mexico have benefited from a bilateral, mutually beneficial partnership focused on advancing the economic interests of both countries.

(2) In 2013, Mexico adopted major energy reforms that opened its energy sector to private investment, increasing energy cooperation between Mexico and the United States and opening new opportunities for United States energy engagement.

(3) On January 18, 2018, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State stated, “Our exchange programs build enduring relationships and networks to advance U.S. national interests and foreign policy goals . . . The role of our exchanges . . . in advancing U.S. national security and economic interests enjoys broad bipartisan support from Congress and other stakeholders, and provides a strong return on investment.”

(4) According to the Institute of International Education, in the 2015–2016 academic year, more than 56,000 United States students studied in other countries in the Western Hemisphere region while more than 84,000 non-United States students from the region studied in the United States, but only 5,000 of those United States students studied in Mexico and only 16,000 of those non-United States students were from Mexico.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to continue deepening economic cooperation between the United States and Mexico;

(2) to seek to prioritize and expand educational and professional exchange programs with Mexico, including through frameworks such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative, the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action), the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, and the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program; and

(3) to promote positive cross-border relations as a priority for advancing United States foreign policy and programs.

SEC. 4. STRATEGY TO PRIORITIZE AND EXPAND EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH MEXICO.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State shall develop a strategy to carry out the policy described in section 3, to include prioritizing and expanding educational and professional exchange programs with Mexico through frameworks such as those referred to in section 3(2).

(b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall—

(1) encourage more academic exchanges between the United States and Mexico at the secondary, post-secondary, and post-graduate levels;

(2) encourage United States and Mexican academic institutions and businesses to collaborate to assist prospective and developing entrepreneurs in strengthening their business skills and promoting cooperation and joint business initiatives across the United States and Mexico;

(3) promote energy infrastructure coordination and cooperation through support of vocational-level education, internships, and exchanges between the United States and Mexico; and

(4) assess the feasibility of fostering partnerships between universities in the United States and medical school and nursing programs in Mexico to ensure that medical school and nursing programs in Mexico have comparable accreditation standards as medical school and

nursing programs in the United States by the Accreditation and Standards in Foreign Medical Education, in addition to the Accreditation Commission For Education in Nursing, so that medical students can pass medical licensing board exams, and nursing students can pass nursing licensing exams, in the United States.

(c) **BRIEFING.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall brief the appropriate congressional committees regarding the strategy required under subsection (a).

SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 6. SUNSET PROVISION.

This Act shall remain in effect until December 31, 2023.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 133), as amended, was passed.

REAFFIRMING THE SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN AND CALLING ON ALL PARTIES TO UPHOLD THEIR COMMITMENTS TO PEACE AND DIALOGUE AS OUTLINED IN THE 2018 REVITALIZED PEACE AGREEMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 338, S. Res. 371.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 371) reaffirming the support of the United States for the people of the Republic of South Sudan and calling on all parties to uphold their commitments to peace and dialogue as outlined in the 2018 revitalized peace agreement.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in italic and an amendment to the preamble to strike the preamble and insert the part printed in italic:

Whereas the people and Government of the United States have a deep and abiding interest in South Sudan's democratic development and post-conflict stabilization;

Whereas the United States was a critical partner in the drafting and implementation of the

2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that laid the groundwork for the 2011 referendum on self-determination, through which the people of South Sudan overwhelmingly voted for independence;

Whereas the United States recognized South Sudan as a sovereign, independent state on July 9, 2011;

Whereas, since the onset of the civil war in South Sudan in December 2013, nearly 400,000 South Sudanese citizens are estimated to have been killed, 1,900,000 have been internally displaced, and 2,300,000 have fled the country and registered as refugees;

Whereas violence erupted in Juba in July 2016 and spread throughout the country in violation of the August 17, 2015, Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS);

Whereas the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed on September 12, 2018, affirmed the Parties' commitment to the permanent ceasefire, humanitarian access, and respect for human rights, and established two phases of implementation, an 8-month Pre-Transitional Period followed by a 36 month Transitional Period that includes the establishment of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU), and calls for elections 60 days prior to the end of the Transitional Period to establish a democratic government;

Whereas the R-ARCSS stipulates that the signatories will create an enabling political, administrative, operational, and legal environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and civilian protection;

Whereas two extensions to the deadline to form the RTGoNU have been granted to allow additional time to complete critical Pre-Transitional tasks, including agreement on the number and boundaries of states and important security arrangements;

Whereas the United States Department of State 2018 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in South Sudan states that both the government and opposition forces engaged in serious human rights abuses by perpetrating extrajudicial killings, including ethnically based targeted killings of civilians, and by engaging in arbitrary detentions, torture, rape, beatings, and looting of property;

Whereas, on March 15, 2019, the United Nations Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for one year and authorized UNMISS to use all necessary means to deter violence against civilians, to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, and to foster a secure environment for the return or relocation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees;

Whereas the people of South Sudan continue to suffer from a humanitarian crisis, despite over \$4,500,000,000 in United States humanitarian aid provided since the conflict began, with more than half the population experiencing acute food insecurity at the peak of the lean season in 2019, and humanitarian organizations are providing more than 5,300,000 people with lifesaving assistance and other vital support services, such as medical care to survivors of sexual violence and facilitating access to education to over 690,000 children;

Whereas South Sudan has been at the lowest tier of the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons rankings since 2015, indicating that its government does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so;

Whereas impunity for past atrocities, corruption, and capture of key sectors of the national economy, such as the oil and mining sectors, continues to drive violence in South Sudan, and signatories to the R-ARCSS committed to the establishment of transitional justice and economic and resource management measures;

Whereas the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2471 on May 30, 2019, to extend its sanctions regime in South Sudan and renew the prohibition of the supply, sale, or transfer to South Sudan of arms and related material or the provision of training, technical, and financial assistance related to military activities or materials until May 31, 2020; and

Whereas peace and security in South Sudan is critical to peace and security in East Africa: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved,

That the Senate—

(1) supports a sustainable peace and democracy in South Sudan;

(2) calls on the incumbent government and all other signatories of the R-ARCSS to—

(A) take concrete and meaningful steps to create an enabling environment, to include security arrangements for Juba and the unification of forces, for all relevant stakeholders to participate actively in the formation of the RTGoNU and South Sudan's democratic development and post-conflict stabilization;

(B) take immediate action to resolve peacefully the remaining political issues for negotiation during the Pre-Transitional Period, including agreement on the number and boundaries of states;

(C) adhere to the cessation of hostilities and ensure humanitarian access;

(D) immediately release all political prisoners and fulfill their responsibility to protect civilians;

(E) ensure respect for the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly; and

(F) cease recruitment and immediately release all child soldiers under the command or influence of the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) and its associated militias;

(3) calls on heads of state of member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa to engage South Sudanese leaders and parties to uphold their commitments to the peace agreement, including maintaining the cease-fire, to make good-faith progress toward peacefully forming the RTGoNU, and to resolve other key issues;

(4) calls on the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to—

(A) intensify bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to helping achieve a permanent and sustainable peace in South Sudan on par with its commitment to ameliorate the suffering of the South Sudanese people;

(B) elevate and consult additional voices in South Sudan to broaden the constituency and shared responsibility for maintaining peace and fulfilling the commitments of the Pre-Transitional and Transitional periods; and

(C) continue to support civilians, particularly women and children, who have been adversely affected by the civil war, and provide assistance to meet humanitarian needs and support peacebuilding, conflict prevention, transitional justice, and reconciliation efforts led by local civil society;

(5) urges the Secretary of State and the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to monitor implementation of the UNMISS mandate authorized by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2459 (2019) and ensure that any return or relocation of IDPs from United Nations Protection of Civilian sites are safe, informed, voluntary, dignified, and conducted in coordination with humanitarian actors;

(6) urges the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Treasury to continue to monitor human rights abuses and corruption in South Sudan and take decisive action using authorities granted under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note);